

### Funding For Viaducts Falls Short of CTA Goal

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Evanston, IL - Although the Chicago Transit Authority made a commitment in its capital improvement program to replace six of Evanston's viaducts on the El's Purple Line, the lack of funds will only allow it to fix one viaduct.

The preliminary work to replace the viaduct at Main Street is currently in process, said Robyn Ziegler, a CTA spokeswoman. But with CTA facing \$1.9 billion in unmet need for capital improvement, the other five viaducts will have to wait for more funding before they can be fixed.

In 2001 CTA ranked the 114 viaducts that compose its system. Of the 15 viaducts given a rating of "one" -- those in the poorest condition -- six are in Evanston.

The remaining nine viaducts are located on the Red Line in Chicago.

CTA then made a commitment to replacing Evanston's viaducts in its capital improvement programs but has so far only started work on Main Street.

"It is critical for the CTA to implement an aggressive plan and fulfill its commitment in dollars to help minimize the potential safety risks these viaducts present to motorists, pedestrians and

CTA riders," **U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.)** said in a press release.

The Purple Line, which serves Evanston and Wilmette, has the oldest viaducts in the system, dating back nearly 50 years.

For some CTA riders who use the buses and trains everyday, safety is the most important concern.

"I ride the CTA often," Chicago resident David Anderson said. "I think they ought to fix (the viaducts) so that no accidents occur."

Anderson added that even though the EI is convenient for him, old lines tend to slow down trains and delay the schedule.

"Fixing them will help people get back to work or to home faster," Anderson said.

Despite CTA's budgetary troubles, some riders said they feel CTA has the money to repair the older lines, especially since CTA has been in the process of renovating other lines.

"We pay enough for the service," Evanston resident Sandra Maris said. "They should have at least enough to get the bridges fixed the proper way."

According to Ziegler, CTA is in the process of getting local and national legislators involved in obtaining more funding for the capital improvement program.

In a letter to Schakowsky, CTA President Frank Kruesi said work on the remaining five viaducts will begin as soon as the additional funding becomes available.

But Kruesi added continued funding for the project is uncertain since federal and state sources are experiencing fiscal difficulties.

In 2002, when the CTA system was re-evaluated, repair and replacement of viaducts was a small part of the overall maintenance program, which also includes replacing tracks and signals.

For everyday riders of the CTA system, which serves about 1.5 million customers per day, waiting for repairs also means waiting for service.

"My constituents are facing a dangerous and serious public safety every day the CTA delays action to renovate viaducts in Evanston," Schakowsky said in her press release.

Although Chicago resident Glory Hodges said she is satisfied with CTA's overall service, she said using the Purple Line some times is challenging.

"I ride it every day and the service is good," Hodges said. "But then some days, like today, we have a lot of delays."